APPARATUS FOR TREATMENT OF SPINAL DISORDERS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Apparatus and methods for advancing and retracting a medical instrument within an introducer device, wherein the instrument includes a distal tip, a distal linear portion, a first distal curve, a substantially linear inter-curve portion, and a second proximal curve. The length of the distal linear portion and the angle of the first curve determine the position of the distal tip within a lumen of the introducer device, such that the distal tip occupies a substantially central transverse location within the lumen and the distal tip avoids contact with the introducer device. The length of the inter-curve portion and the angle of the second curve determine deflection of the distal tip from a longitudinal axis of the shaft when the second curve is extended distally beyond a distal end of the introducer device. Also, methods and apparatus for treating an intervertebral disc by ablation of disc tissue. A method of the invention includes positioning at least one active electrode within the intervertebral disc, and applying at least a first high frequency voltage between the active electrode(s) and one or more return electrode(s), wherein the volume of the nucleus pulposus is decreased, pressure exerted by the nucleus pulposus on the annulus fibrosus is reduced, and discogenic pain of a patient is alleviated . In other embodiments, a curved or steerable probe is guided to a specific target site within a disc to be treated, and the disc tissue at the target site is ablated by application of at least a first high frequency voltage between the active electrode(s) and one or more return electrode(s). A method of making an electrosurgical probe is also disclosed.